

VZCZCXRO5330
PP RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDIR
DE RUEHRH #1023 2171346
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 051346Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1353
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA PRIORITY

UNCLAS RIYADH 001023

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP (HARRIS)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [BEXP](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: SAUDI H1N1 UPDATE: SIX DEATHS, VACCINES ORDERED,
NO BAN ON HAJJ PILGRIMS TO DATE

¶1. (SBU) The Ministry of Health (MOH) has reported six deaths and a total of 595 H1N1 cases to date. The six H1N1 victims range in age from 15 to 32 years, and span the country, including the Eastern, Qassim, Asir, and Riyadh provinces. Many of the victims reportedly suffered from chronic illnesses, and Health Minister Abdullah Al-Rabeeah said August 2 that the Ministry would conduct full inquiries into the deaths. The family of one of the deceased and the Sri Lankan Charge d'Affaires contend that hospitals in Dammam and Riyadh, respectively, did not diagnose two of the victims properly. They claim the victims visited area hospitals numerous times before being diagnosed too late to provide treatment.

¶2. (SBU) The MOH reportedly ordered four million doses of H1N1 vaccine from multinational pharmaceutical companies to treat Hajj and Umra pilgrims. The first shipment of vaccines is expected to arrive by the end of October.

¶3. (SBU) Despite confusing press reports, the Saudi government has not issued a ban on Hajj pilgrims of any age or health condition. They have issued a travel advisory urging vulnerable populations to postpone Umra, but insist that the decision to make either pilgrimage to the Kingdom remains a personal one. Although H1N1 has disproportionately affected teens and young people in the Kingdom, Al-Rabeeah maintains that the Ministry considers the elderly, pregnant women, and children under 12 at higher risk of suffering from H1N1-related complications. Al-Rabeeah assured the public August 4 that the H1N1 situation did not call for concern as most cases have been moderate with a recovery rate of more than 90 percent.
ERDMAN